

Regional Interagency Task Force Monthly Report

Levee Repair and Associated Restoration Projects

Midwest Floods of June 2008

31 Oct 2008

1. REFERENCE:

a. OMB memorandum dated 18 Feb 1997, Subject: Floodplain Management and Procedures for Evaluation and Review of Levee and Associated Restoration Projects.

b. OMB memorandum dated 25 April 1997, Subject: Monthly Agency Reports on the Status of Levee Repair and Associated Restoration.

c. U.S. Army Corps of Engineers, Engineering Regulation No. 500-1-1, dated 30 September 2001, Subject: Civil Emergency Management Program.

2. PURPOSE: To provide a monthly status report, as required by the above references, on Regional Interagency Levee Task Force (RILTF) activities during the preceding month related to levee repairs and non-structural alternatives (NSA) in Iowa, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, and Wisconsin. Expanded background and procedural information that is foundational in nature is presented in the September 2008 Monthly Report.

3. BACKGROUND: Soon after the June 2008 floods, the USACE Omaha, Kansas City, Rock Island, St. Louis, St. Paul, and Louisville district commanders issued public notices for levee rehabilitation assistance under the PL 84-99 program. Public notices were issued by FEMA, NRCS, and some states as well. Not long after emergency declarations were posted, the USACE HQ requested that the Mississippi River Division stand-up a Regional Interagency Levee Task Force to include all pertinent federal, state, and local agencies in the 5 states mentioned above. The authority to do so is provided in reference 1a. By mid-July the basic pieces were in place to begin fashioning a regional approach to short and long-term recovery from the floods.

4. INTERAGENCY LEVEE TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES: Ultimately, the ILTF is designed to help move all agencies from an independent short-term recovery perspective to one of collaborated long-term flood risk reduction planning and implementation. Getting there will involve two main efforts: implementing non-structural alternative projects (NSAPs) in lieu of levee rehab as the situation warrants, and identifying potential best-practice policy changes that arise during the evaluation of NSAPs. The Interagency Levee Working Groups (ILWGs) will forward recommended NSAPs and policy revisions via White Papers. The ILTF will endorse recommendations to the appropriate agency for consideration, as the ILTF members collectively decide.

There are 5 NSAP White Papers currently being developed for presentation to the ILTF in the near future. In addition, a few Policy Revision White Papers are in the early stages of development. There are currently no NSA or Policy White Papers pending action by the ILTF.

The ILTF has been focused to this point on gaining an understanding of state's needs, collective authorities and programs available to respond to those needs, as well as on-going activities to meet short-term recovery goals. To date, the following educational briefings have been provided to ILTF leadership to broaden its decisional foundation: State of Iowa Rebuild Iowa Office long term plan, Illinois Long Term Recovery Council, Upper Mississippi River Basin Association Flood 2008 Statement, NRCS Floodplain Easements and Wetlands Reserve Programs, USGS

Rainfall/River Forecasting initiatives, FEMA Map Modernization program and Buy-Out Authorities, and USACE briefings on ILTF structure, processes, and status of on-going evaluations.

Future educational briefings include: State of Missouri long term plan, Upper Mississippi and Missouri Rivers Association plan, non-federal earthen dam safety, elements of buying-down flood risk, and flood-proofing.

Decisional briefings will be made to the ILTF in the near future for endorsement of NSAPs and recommended policy revisions.

The ILTF is also beginning development of a plan to implement a long-term regional interagency working group that can continue the work initiated by the ILTF. USACE will provide a briefing on its Silver Jacket Program as an example of a possible component of a long-term plan.

5. INTERAGENCY LEVEE WORKING GROUP ACTIVITIES: The ILWGs are designed to provide a state-based interagency platform for transitioning flood recovery from traditional response to a long-term regional framework. The ILWGs review the project rehab reports posted by each agency to determine which projects have potential for solutions using non-structural risk management methods.

The attached ILWG Project Review Activity table summarizes the ILWG activity through 31 October 2008. As of that date, a total of 213 reports were posted by all agencies, 66 of those have been reviewed by the ILWGs, with a result of 5 potential NSA projects identified. There are still a considerable number of reports to be prepared and written; thus there is additional opportunity for identifying potential NSAPs. The 5 potential NSAPs for which White Papers are being developed by the ILWGs are:

- Vandalia Drainage & Levee District (D&LD), Illinois; potential levee set-back, which will increase the size of the available floodplain of the Illinois River.
- Henderson D&LD, IL; buy-out/relocate all or a portion of the village of Gulfport, IL to avoid repetitious disaster recovery costs.
- Grand Tower D&LD, IL; potential levee set-back or development of flank levees to allow formerly protected USFS lands to return to floodplain status.
- Louisa County, Iowa, D&LD #11; levee was breached in 7 locations; this potential NSA could involve repair of 2 breaches, returning some lands to floodplain status, raising a highway, or other components.
- Kuhs D&LD, St. Charles County, MO; early stages of evaluation of components that are aimed at returning much of the land to floodplain and wetlands status.

The ILWGs are also developing Policy White Papers for submittal to the ILTF. Issues that have surfaced that may be evaluated for policy change recommendations include:

- Levee "unwatering" responsibilities for FEMA and USACE
- Repair of damaged levees in undeclared counties
- Repair of damaged agricultural levees in watersheds greater than 400 sq. mi. (limit of NRCS authority and outside USACE authority)
- Repair of pump stations damaged during flood fighting
- ILTF and ILWG activation procedures
- Flood damage repairs and provisions as provided in PL 84-99

6. OUTREACH: The message being communicated is that flood recovery in the Midwest remains a regional priority and that agencies are working together to ensure that recovery is approached as being a long-term flood risk reduction partnership.

The Interagency Levee Task Force web page (www.iwr.usace.army.mil/ILTF/) is a valuable outreach tool. It provides the public a menu for "one-stop shopping", by posting the authorities and programs of most agencies participating in flood recovery efforts. It is also used to post the

status of NSA activities being evaluated by the ILTF and the ILWGs. In addition, the web site contains guidance, regulations, policies, ILTF management plans, operational plans, newsletters, and calendar of ILTF and related events.

The ILWG team leads in each state continue to get the ILTF message out to the public by participating in local government and D&LD meetings, attending joint agency seminars and conferences, issuing press releases, and partnering with state planning commissions. The response is very favorable. Two news articles were written in October that praised the mission and goals of the ILTF and argued the case for a long-term commitment to this type of interagency forum.

The October ILTF meeting was held October 23rd in Springfield, IL, and was attended by 60-70 federal, state, and local agency members, a member of the press, and a staff member of Senator Obama. Every ILTF meeting is announced in local papers, encouraging attendance by the general public.

7. PERSONNEL: Project delivery teams have been established at 4 Districts to manage the design and construction work necessary to repair the damaged levees. Additionally, Corps of Engineers personnel have been assigned as ILWG leads in the states of IA, IL, IN, MO, and WI to lead the coordination with other state and federal agency partners for short and long-term recovery and flood risk reduction. The ILWG are actively coordinating at the Joint Field Office sites in each state. There is a core group of 3 full-time persons, and 4 part-time persons assigned by the USACE to manage day-to-day activities of the ILTF.

8. SUMMARY: The ILTF continues to provide a sound forum for those agencies motivated to participate in finding NSAs. There are 5 potential NSAs being developed at this point, 3 of which are especially promising. NSA White Papers and Policy White Papers will be submitted to the ILTF for consideration in the very near future. We are reaching out to the local citizens, landowners, and the levee districts in an effort to promote NSAs, but find little short-term interest. NSA projects will be more accepted by the public and gain more wide spread use as a result of increased public knowledge and demonstrated success of implemented NSAs. The ILTF is beginning to tackle the challenge of developing a sustainable long-term working group to continue the ILTF mission in the future.

(Signed)
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